132 take the corrugated iron roofs off urban houses. Most tornadoes do not hit the ground, but if they do there is destruction. Usually such a cyclone precedes a heavy rainstorm.

The fog in the rainy season, called "gum", is cold and thick and covers the countryside. On the other hand, the fog that precedes the light rains of April and May, called gag or tegag, is milky, light, and causes very humid heat. Metereologists believe that it is the result of the sand raised by the hot "simoun" wind blowing from Arabia and the eastern lowlands of Ethiopia.

●821 The importance of "rain in season" is of course an urgent concern of people living in a primarily agricultural economy. An unseasonal fall, which occasionally arrives after the end of the rainy season, when the grown grain begins to ripen, is called sabbiya, and is highly unpopular. The proverb, to indicate "all things in their proper time", refers to seasonal rains:

"In (the month of) Hamlē, beating-down rain;
in (the month of) Sānyē, fine drizzle."

At the beginning of the rainy season, in Sanye, the farmer wishes for constant drizzle, wetting the ground just enough to enable him to make headway with his scratch-plow and to seed in the previously sunbaked soil; in Hamlē, he wishes for plentiful rain so that the sprouting grain will grow fast and tall.

132 The Abyssinians themselves long ago recognized three dis-
137 tinct climatic zones in their country:
24

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

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alluvial soil - "borbwara märet", rich silt carried by rivers and brooks.

infertile soils - "qoda märet" dries too quickly after rains;
"arbacha märet", reddish, after erosion, infertile mounds;
"gebgaba märet", harvest withers at stalk before maturity;
"gergera märet", useless to plow, better leave for wild fruit.
"fech märet", abandoned land, leave for pasturage.

hard-to-penetrate - "gewchacha märet", plow cannot penetrate readily,
"gombore märet", sandy but very rocky, hard to plow,
"chencha märet" rocky terrain, where rain does not penetrate well.

[32
82] The preferred early rain is the light, intermittent but penetrating "zeg yalä zenab", not the heavy continuous downpour that occurs later. Fast-growing barley, called 243
251 "bällega" after the "bälg" season, is sown first, during the light rains of March, for it can be harvested 3 months later, just before the heavy rains, to help tide the people over until the main harvests. This is very important because of the traditional hesitancy of the farmer to store crops. Historically, he would rather have it almost ready on the stalk, and would rather risk a crop failure than

796 food of the feast prepared by the losing side.
526 In the evening "fires of joy" are lit, where the rain-drenched, weary and sore contestants and others can dry out, drink barley beer, and are supposed to forget and forgive the hostilities. Some may still boast of individual feats of heroism, in Amhara warrior style; others will sulk. But generally the day ends in harmony, after the excitement which itself was a welcome break in the monotonous hibernation of the rainy season.

796 The end of the annual cycle coincides with the end of the rainy season. The last 5 days (in leap years 6 days) are added after the end of the last month, and are called "Pagumēn" or "Qwagmē". On the 3rd day the [776] annual festival of St. Raphael, called "qeddus Rufaēl", the water saint, takes place. The rain, which still falls •[821] heavily that day, is considered "tebel" (holy water) and to have the power to dull the poison of snakes so [787] that their bites will not be fatal. Much rain during Pagumēn is taken as an omen that the crops will be good.

796 This day is final examination day for the boys
874 who have attended church school long enough to be promoted to "deacon". They are examined in correct chanting of liturgy and prayers. To be mentally wide awake they often go to the dabbara beforehand, and, for a small gift, obtain the stimulating herb "esa fars" (lit. Persian wood) or drink boiled "astänagär" (lit. the plant that makes to talk), which also helps to overcome stage-fright.

796 The younger children go from hut to hut, chanting:
857 "In the name of Rufael,
539

887 preoccupied with the immediate demands of life. The culture pattern
812 encourages the shemagalye to give much time and effort to this wonderment, for it belongs to his prime role and social duty at this stage: the accumulation of wisdom. The church does not interfere with this wonderment and its expression, partly because it has not bothered to establish dogma on many subjects.

A. The Natural Universe.

821 In many ways the Amhara concept of the universe resembles that of
[[71]] early medieval Europe, plus understandable similarities to the Middle East and Africa. Some conceptualizations are elaborations from the Biblical universe, readily recognizable because almost always the Geez language is used to express them. Other conceptualizations are animistic, and usually employ Cushitic terminology.

The universe is regarded as a Ptolemaic system, with the earth as the fixed center around which the sun turns. A distinction is made between the physical world, called simply "arät mäzän" (lit. the 4 corners); and the world populated by all creatures, "aläm" (lit. world, in the Geez language). The persistence of this traditional view of a flat earth is so great that even Amhara schoolteachers in the modern elementary schools in the provinces, who are required to teach a spherical earth, privately admit that they don't believe it themselves!

Heavenly bodies and metereological phenomena are interpreted as directly related to human events. Venus is called "astärboshäsh" or "astäryo", (lit. the one who gives hunger and then flees), because the planet appears in the very brief dusk, when the heat of the day is over and one gets hungry. Because Venus is "fleeing and inconstant like a woman", she is given the feminine gender.

821 Considerable attention is given to the moon ("chäräqa"), for it
243 is believed to cause the ripening of the grain after the sun has

821 caused the tender plant to sprout; therefore, cereal grains just
[243] beginning to sprout are called "charäqwa". Full moon is a good time
[484] to travel, avoiding the heat of the day especially in the hot lowlands where travel in daytime is almost impossible; also it is safer since approaching or ambushing bandits can be more readily seen than earlier or later in the lunar cycle.

Dawn is personified, regarded as a young day being suckled ("täbba") by the warm and expansive sun, after chill of the night on the plateau.

787 However, the working out of astrological systems is left to the däbtära, who collects his knowledge from "secret" books (in Geez), more often actually from apprenticeship and extracurricular activities while in church school, and uses it in writing especially powerful and expensive amulets.

821 The various kinds of rain are almost as important to the Amhara as snows to the Eskimo and sands to the desert Arab. For the Amhara with his primitive plowing, has to wait until the right kind of light rain loosens the sunbaked soil; and his simple hut is little protection from the heavy rains. He therefore studies clouds and wind direction in relation to topography. The fine and penetrating rain ("zeg yalä zenab") permits the use of the common scratch-plow, and seeding. The heavy rainy season brings downpours, and is also accompanied by strong gusts of wind ("wächafo") and tornadoes. When the thunderstorm ends and a rainbow appears, it seems as if the earth had been reprieved, so that the rainbow is called "maryam mäqanät" (lit. the jealousy of Mary; i.e. her intercession, in the Geez language). However, when a rainbow occurs while it is still raining, the interpretation is more animistic, for it is regarded as an unnatural event, heralding the moment at which wild

821 animals and evil spirits give birth. It is called "näber wäldaläch" (lit. the leopard has given birth), or "jeb wäldach", (lit. the hyena has had a litter).

823 Volcanic activity, which occurs not infrequently in these mountains that are of young geological age, is interpreted as a threatened repetition of the Biblical event that swallowed Sodom, and is indeed called "Sodom" (another connotation is "greedy").

Geographical directions are taken either from the Geez, e.g. "me'erab" for west (lit. where the sun sets), and "mesrag" for east; or the location of Abyssinian provinces is used: "Semyen" for north, "Azeb" for wouthwest. South is "däbub" (probably Cushitic).

821 Daytime and nighttime are regarded as two very different phases of the universe, altering radically behavior of natural phenomena, animals, plants, even human behavior. The phrase "the night belongs to the hyena" refers not only to the nightly roaming of that animal, but also to the roaming of evil spirits at night, as well as dangerous strangers and actual bandits. As a consequence, even the hospitable, outgoing householder of the daytime changes to sullen and suspicious behavior if strangers suddenly arrive after dark. When he must leave the hut, he carries a weapon, in the rural areas. Even in Addis Ababa, the official curfew at midnight is little resented by the average Amhara, because of this traditional pattern.

574 576 The period of a week is regarded as a time unit with regard to the primary group and kin visiting. When two members of these groups have not seen each other for more than a week, they greet each other with "endemen sänebätu" (lit. how did you spend the week away).

776 825 The world of the spirits, who also inhabit the universe in large numbers, is believed to be in close relationship with the animal

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

X794 T76 735 (actually directed at the patient), and "train" the minor zars to do their individual "gurri" somewhat differently, more "correctly". This "training" may include occasional beating of the "horse" of the zar (the patient).

Another advanced and complicated technique used by highly experienced zar doctors, in certain stubborn cases, is to transfer a stubborn zar from one patient of the zar congregation to a "stronger" member, so that the effect will be more controllable. This transfer is made on the principle of contagion. But a zar doctor is not supposed to inoculate a person with a really evil zar, for that would make him a sorcerer and set both the chief zar doctors and mankind in general against him.

Only in case of such a completely evil zar does the zar doctor attempt complete exorcism, considered a very dangerous form of spiritual surgery. During a somber ceremony, which lacks the gaiety of the usual [782] zar society, a black hen is killed, the evil zar is lured to feed on the body of the bloody animal, and the cadaver is quickly thrown in the bush, a thicket, or the river. This transfer is called "danqara", is tangential to the zar cult, and more related to "buda" and "tänqway" complexes (described later).

[787] Occasionally an old and experienced zar doctor, especially if a man, is asked to perform divination. If his personal zar happens to be "adept at prophecy", especially if he has been "educated at Jerusalem", the zar doctor may agree to put the question before him.

X794 T76 821 Seasonal variations are considered very important in treatment procedures, for the zar spirits are regarded to be as much dominated by the climate as are humans. They are dormant or inactive during the 3-month

X-794 TK 621 rainy season, when they hover in the confinement of their grottoes just as Abyssinians in their huts. Like humans, zar spirits become active soon after the rains, when the "Mäsqäl" feasts approach, the yellow flowers carpet the landscape and the green grain begins to mature. The favorite time for zar spirits to strike is between midnight and about 3 A.M.; but some individualistic spirits specialize in the hour of sunset, and some even midday.

X-794 Belief in the curative powers of the zar doctors is still widespread and strong among the Amhara. Only in the city of Addis Ababa has the present government tried to subdue it, so that devotees have to travel away from the city, for their major reunions. Many men do not like X-794 552 to admit their belief in the zar spirits or that they themselves consult zar doctors. This is because of the feminine emphasis of the zar cult. Women are more often possessed, and do not hesitate to admit it; they often seem to look forward to cult membership. Grown men, however, unless afflicted with an ailment as obvious as epilepsy, are ashamed to be seen in a cult group, especially when the cult doctor is a woman. The major exceptions are the brothers of the woman zar doctor, who are often almost as pixilated by inheritance and contact with their mother as the doctor herself; the zar poet and hymn-composer who is usually a man; and the hired drummer.

b. Characteristics and Attributes of Male and Female "Zar" Spirits.

X-794 TK 552 The organization of the male zar spirits is more complex than that of the female ones. Moreover, several male zar spirits arrogate names to themselves that otherwise are generic: e.g. "Gurəza" - usually generic for all male zars; "Wəqabe"- usually generic for all protective spirits;

754 and are permitted to be dirty most of the time. As for males, the
776 buda also likes to feast on healthy-looking, fat, handsome warriors
[52] and chiefs. "Buda" is the general diagnosis when a person always known as healthy suddenly sickens and dies. Therefore it is feared even by the bravest warriors.

754 Even at present, when "modernization" is proceeding from the
776 central government, "buda" belief has not shrunk. It has simply
178 expanded to take in modern attractions. Thus, police officers in the provincial towns are believed to have attracted "buda", who has developed a taste for officers in nice, new uniforms; and is believed to be "greedy" for healthy-looking boys doing modern gymnastics in their new elementary schools, eager to consume their physical prowess and grace. Even rich, strong, fat, gay, well dressed Europeans are regarded as vulnerable, but less so because "they do not fear him". Fear attracts him too.

"Buda" is most active in August, at the height of the rainy season.
[82] His favorite time to strike is just after a heavy thunderstorm, when tornado-like gusts of wind seem to pull up the hut and try to pull the roof off. This would enable "buda" to "see" his victims better, and cannibalize them.

751 Many ways of trying to prevent victimization by "buda", or at
754 least of reducing one's vulnerability, have been devised over the
776 centuries. To reduce vulnerability, one should not appear too happy, too gay. One should not become an object of open admiration, or of envy and jealousy. One should further paraphrase the tabooed word "buda", by saying "watch your eyes". Newlyweds, who are very vulnerable, should cover their glowing faces for ten days, to keep

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

in January. But the giant of holidays in this season is Epiphany, about a fortnight after Christmas. The holiday commemorates the baptism of Jesus; the name of the holiday, *Ṭimqat,* means "baptism." In preparation for Ṭimqat new clothes are given to children and the adults' *shammā,* grown very gray over the months, are washed in every household.

The program for Ṭimqat is long and complicated. At sunset on the eve of the holiday, the people don their white clothes and repair to the local church, from whence they escort the *tābot* to a place where it will spend the night—near some stream or pool. They go home for supper, and return to that site for singing and dancing until late at night. About two o'clock in the morning Mass is performed, after which quantities of *dābo* and *ṭallā* are consumed. Toward dawn, or shortly after, the clergy bless the water and sprinkle it on those assembled. Many like to bathe in the sanctified water at this time. It is the occasion for baptizing the children of syphilitic mothers and those who want to be rebaptized.

By noon on Ṭimqat Day a large crowd has assembled at the ritual site, those who went home for a little sleep having returned, and the holy ark is escorted back to its church in colorful procession. The clergy, bearing robes and umbrellas of many hues, perform rollicking dances and songs; the elders march solemnly with their weapons, attended by middle-aged men singing a long-drawn, low-pitched *haaa hooo;* and the children run about with sticks and games. Dressed up in their finest, the women chatter excitedly on their one real day of freedom in the year. The young braves leap up and down in spirited dances, tirelessly repeating rhythmic songs. When the holy ark has been safely restored to its dwelling-place, everyone goes home for feasting. In the meantime, the eyes of gamesome men and women have met and secret rendezvous have been arranged.

Ṭimqat ushers in a season of weddings, which comes to an abrupt end with the onset of the great fast before Easter. For eight long weeks, body and spirit are depressed by the heavy fasting requirements. The mood reaches a climax in the final week of Lent. Then no heavy work is allowed, and the more devout peasants go to church many times and intensify their daily schedule of prayers. Total abstinence is practiced for the forty-eight hours preceding the final Mass, performed in the middle of the night before Easter.

Gluttony follows this long deprivation. It is a season of the highest spirits. For eight weeks the inexorable requirement to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays is waived. The bins are full with the harvest of wheat, barley, and chick-peas. New crops of pulse start to appear in the fields. It is the most favored time of all for weddings.

And then, as the Amhara themselves view it, June brings another time of sadness. With the onset of the heavy rains come attacks of malaria in the lowlands, typhus in the highlands. Swollen streams make travel difficult and

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

hazardous. Moisture and chill lower the resistance of man and beast to respiratory infections. The weekly fasting schedule is resumed, and the more devout observe the thirty-day fast of the Disciples. In August, finally, the sixteen-day fast in honor of the Assumption of Mary is observed by everyone older than six or seven years.

On the thirteenth day of that fast occurs the strange holiday of Buhē. Before and during this day, which is marked by the baking of special *dābo* for the shepherds, the countryside crackles with the reports of shepherds' whips. In this season when the humid air lends an explosive sound, the shepherds crack their whips for fun; but older boys and men join in great whipping battles on Buhē,* in which two teams lash each other until the members of one can stand it no more. On the evenings of Buhē, small bonfires are lit all over the countryside, and more *dābo* is eaten and whips cracked.[5] A few days later the fast of the Assumption is over. Young and old look forward to the end of the rains and the festivities that commence with the new year.

These are the days and years of the Amhara peasant. Some other aspects of his life that come to the fore when more analytic perspectives are applied will be discussed in later chapters. But this calendar of activities forms the immediately observable setting for the "inner world" of the Amhara peasantry: those ideas, sentiments, and values which constitute its outlook on life.

THE WORLD OF MEANING

The Natural Universe

The Amhara peasant is not familiar with most of the cosmological notions found in the Great Tradition of Abyssinian culture, as transmitted through books like *Qalamtis* and *Aksimareos* and the oral traditions of learned churchmen. It is unusual for him to have a precise image of the layers of water, fire, and air beneath the earth, and it is still less likely for him to be familiar with the complicated hierarchy of invisible worlds, watery skies, and seven "real" heavens which are enumerated in the Abyssinian cosmology. He believes that stars influence human affairs, but leaves the possession of astrological knowledge to the *dabtarā*. The presence of cultural specialists who know about such matters has relieved him of the burden of dealing with ideas about the cosmos, ideas which are more widely diffused in more homogeneous societies.

The peasant's working conception of the cosmos is thus a very simplified version of that of his Great Tradition, together with certain pagan notions. Like his more learned countrymen, he divides the universe into two main parts: the world, *alam*, consisting of the earth, sun, moon, and stars; and

* This custom is now extinct in many Amhara areas.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

heaven, *samāy*, the abode of supernatural beings and the souls of the dead. The earth is seen as flat, though some believe its shape to be square, others think it is round like a disc, and still others imagine it to extend without limit. That the terrain of Ethiopia is so obviously not flat is explained by reference to the great flood, after which the parts which dried quickly became highlands (*dēgā*), the parts slow to dry becoming lowlands (*qolā*). The peasant explains the greater heat of the lowlands by saying that they receive less wind than the highlands.

Beneath the earth's surface is an obscure area called *maq*, a depth to which the bodies of evildoers drop after burial. There is also a large subterranean ocean, *weqniyānos*, into which all the rivers and lakes on earth descend. The earth itself is held up, according to some, by a Y-shaped piece of wood; according to others, by two serpents; still another view is that no support is needed other than the will of God, as the saying indicates:

> Ay, My God! Lord who stretched forth the heavens without a pillar, and the earth without tent-pegs.

The rotation of the sun *above* the earth causes the alternation of night and day. The imagery of this rotation is that of someone going home at night and coming out in the morning. Attitudes toward the sun are quite ambivalent. The sun is appreciated for dispersing the morning chill and for causing seed to germinate, but it is feared as a source of sickness and death.*

The moon is highly regarded, which is probably a vestige of pre-Christian moon worship. At the Ethiopian latitude the moon is functional, for its bright illumination facilitates night travel, especially desirable in the hotter regions. Beyond this, the moon is considered a powerful agent. It is chief of the sky, commander of an army of stars and it is the force which causes crops to grow after the sun has brought forth seedlings.

In the heavenly realm there are two regions located on either side of God's dwelling-place. To the right is an area where good souls repair for an eternity of ease after being judged shortly after the death of their bodies. Known both as the "kingdom of heaven" and "paradise"—terms which refer to quite different spheres in the Orthodox cosmology but are fused in the vulgar mind—it is regarded as a home where food and clothes are plentiful and freely distributed. To the left is the place where wicked souls are taken by the devil to be scorched eternally in the fire of Gehenna, also called *Si'ol* (again a fusion of concepts which are distinct for the learned). This treatment of the damned is made worse by alternate dippings in icy water, though some believe that the wicked souls get a respite from their tortures on weekends.

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* The TAT's revealed a great dread of the sun; nearly every respondent interpreted one or another of the cards in terms of the sun's dangerousness.

*753 776 rosy.

*753 825 Likift-powers are also associated with crawling insects, spiders, lizards, and the infrequent highland snake. As with the ganel, these creepers are innately contaminating, either through direct contact with their persons, or indirectly through media which they have touched---such as clothing and water---or which they have *[192] expelled---such as uring and saliva. This likift results in ringworm, varioloid and exzemoid skin diseases; because of their inherent toxicity, these creatures are also frequent ingredients in poisonous infusions (yijeseb).

*753 776 825 Sometimes, it is problematic whether the conditions which attract the attentions of ganel and creeper are not themselves sufficient to produce certain syndromes. For example, serious stomach pain, bloat, and feverish coughing are linked to the consumption of stale food or soured talla beer; these substances are, in turn, favorites of ganels. Similarly, the stench of bodily filth appeals to ganel and creeper, and is a common precursor to scabies and various rashes. However, both spoiled foodstuffs and filth are believed noxious enough to produce these ailments, without requiring the assistance of ganels or creepers.

*753 • 821 The notion of contact-pathogenicity which characterizes likift is also associated with a sun-borne agency known as gerifta. There is an important difference be-

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

*753
821

tween the two agencies, however. With likift, the pathogenic source is known to be the inherently contaminating persons of various corporeal beings. With gerifta, disease-causing powers are only circumstantially associated with the sun, and emphasis is focused on the conditions under which contact with direct sunlight is potentially dangerous.

The sun is regarded with no awe, nor is it personalized in any way. Moderate exposure to its rays threatens no special danger; choice of daily dress, for example, is determined by considerations of comfort and propriety, rather than prophylaxis. When, however, sunlight falls upon an unclean body part---a perspiring torso, a diner's unclean mouth, a nursing breast---or upon a body emerging naked from a toga's cool confines, gerifta threatens. Although symptoms vary according to the area of the body which is affected, such gerifta ailments begin with a surface irritation. If untreated, the symptoms intensify producing scabies, furuncles, mastitis, and bothersome rashes.

Even in the absence of special conditions, prolonged exposure to the sun of certain body areas can produce painful body compalints, such as headache, and conjunctivitis, blindness, earache, tonsillitis, and toothache. Lastly, gerifta-mists are created when sunlight falls on soil recently moistened by showers or urine.

841 woman's kinswomen who hold her down, the midwife repeatedly massages the woman's abdomen until the baby has emerged. The umbilical cord is knotted close to the baby and again near the mother, and then severed in the middle. The midwife then squeezes the woman's abdomen to eject the afterbirth, inserts her hand up the vagina to extract any remaining portion, and then passes the organ to an assistant who takes it outside
846 for burial. The midwife then turns to the infant, washes it and carefully "shapes" its eyes, nose, and head into desireable conformations. Finally, the mother's body is washed.

*759 844 The midwife's therapy is conspicuously lacking in the secret and magical elements characteristic of herbalist therapies. It is, in addition, the only Amhara medical specialty which can be acquired without formal tuteledge, by observing and assisting established midwives in delivering infants.

843 844 Pregnancy and childbirth are considered dangerous experiences. Gerifta is a special threat: Nakedness
• [821] under the sun may cause the fetus to turn in the womb and threaten breach birth, and urinating in the sun can
[845] induce premature labor. Childbirth is sometimes the setting for divine punishment by means of breach birth.
[776] The pregnant woman is also a favorite victim of ganela, typically, she experiences great hemorrhaging, severe

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

753 grazing. Both highland zones are considered ideal for
131 human habitation. While residents of the dega zone oc-
133
821 casionally comment on what they regard as the uncomfor-
table summer heat of the weyna dega, at the same time
it is acknowledged that the rainy season (kiramt) is more
burdensome in the dega. The rains last from May to
September and are marked by temperatures in the mid-
thirties in dega lands and perhaps ten to fifteen degrees
warmer in the weyna dega. This season is regarded as a
particularly bad time for kurtimat (rheumatoid complaints)
whose severity is considered greatest in the dega zone.
Epidemiologically, the dega is also associated with a
relatively high incidence of yinifas basiyta ("the wind
disease"), an ailment described in Chapter One.

131 Although reliable population estimates are lacking,
101 the weyna dega and dega zones contain perhaps 85% of
161 Begemder's people. These rural highlands are occupied
197 by five ethnic groups, racially indistinguishable from
144 one another and, with an exception, now speaking a com-
mon Semetic languase, Amharic. The Amhara are the most
numerous of Begemder's highland peoples, and extend into
the provinces of Gojam and Shoa, to the south. Within
the Begemder highlands, they occupy the area south of
latitude $13^{0}30'$. North of this line live the Tigre, a
related people who speak a cognate language, Tigrinya.
101 Both Amhara and Tigre are Coptic Christians, and from
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